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SHAKESPEARE'S ITERATIVE IMAGERY

(i) AS UNDERSONG

(ii) AS TOUCHSTONE, IN HIS WORK

by

CAROLINE F. E. SPURGEON

ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE LECTURE
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ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE LECTURE
SHAKESPEARE'S ITERATIVE IMAGERY

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HIS WORK

By CAROLINE F. E. SPURGEON

Read May 6, 1931

ITERATIVE imagery, that is the repetition of an idea or picture in the images used in any one play, is a marked characteristic of Shakespeare's art; indeed, it is, I think, his most individual way of expressing his imaginative vision.

It is quite clear that it is his habit of mind to have before him, as he writes, some picture or symbol, which recurs again and again in the form of images throughout a play, and I have already shown in an earlier paper¹ that these leading motives, for instance in the tragedies, are born of the emotions of the theme, and shed considerable light on the way Shakespeare himself looked at it.

Thus in *Romeo and Juliet* the beauty and ardour of young love is seen by Shakespeare as the irradiating glory of sunlight and starlight in a dark world. The dominating image is *light*, every form and manifestation of it. Each of the lovers thinks of the other as light: to Juliet, Romeo is 'day in night'; to Romeo, Juliet is the sun rising from the east; and, in the height of love's ecstasy, each sees the other as stars in heaven, dimming by their radiance the heavenly bodies themselves. The background, both of things seen, and of the imagery, is of light against darkness; sunshine, starlight, moonbeams, sunrise and sunset, fire, candles, and torches, set off by quick coming darkness, clouds, mist, rain, and night, forming a running accompaniment which augments unconsciously in us the picture or sensation of an almost blinding flash of light, suddenly ignited, and

¹ *Leading Motives in the Imagery of Shakespeare's Tragedies*: Oxford University Press, 1930.

as suddenly quenched, which was undoubtedly the way Shakespeare saw the story, in its swift and tragic beauty.

So also I have shown that the idea of a tumour, a hidden corruption, needing the surgeon's knife to release it, is the 'leading motive' in *Hamlet*, and throws light on Shakespeare's own view of the problem of Hamlet's dilemma, just as the imagery which plays round the figure of Macbeth, revealing him as a dwarfish and ignoble creature clad in robes too large for him, is a good indication of at least one aspect of Shakespeare's own conception of his character, as he saw it pictorially.

The discovery of this 'undersong' was an early result of a piece of work on which I have been engaged for some years, which is the assembling, classifying, and cross-referencing of all Shakespeare's images, using the material thus collected as data upon which to base deductions and conclusions.

When I say 'images' I mean every kind of picture, drawn in every kind of way, in the form of simile or metaphor—in their widest sense—to be found in Shakespeare's work. Such a picture can be so extended as to take up a large part of a scene, as does the symbol of the untended garden in *Richard II*, or it can be suggested by a single word:

Ripeness is all;

it may be a simple analogy from everyday things:

They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk,

or delicate fancy from a world of imagination:

A lover may bestride the gossamer

That idles in the wanton summer air

And yet not fall; so light is vanity;

it may take the form of a personification drawn at full length—Time, the fashionable host, welcoming and speeding his guests; or it may be flashed on us in one vivid verb,

Glamis hath murdered sleep;

and it may be every kind of metaphor,—Lady Macbeth

urging her lord to 'screw his courage to the sticking-place', Duncan, after life's fitful fever, sleeping well, Donalbain fearing the 'daggers in men's smiles', and Macbeth wading in blood or supping 'full with horrors'. For this purpose it is the picture that is important, not the particular way the picture is drawn, though that becomes of first interest when one studies Shakespeare's art and its development.

I embarked on this task of collecting and classifying the images, because it seemed to me that it might provide a new method of approach to Shakespeare, and I believe I have, by a happy fortune, hit on such a method, hitherto untried, which is yielding most interesting and important results. It not only throws light from a fresh angle, as we have seen in the tragedies, upon Shakespeare's imaginative and pictorial vision, upon his own ideas about his own plays and the characters in them, but it seems to me to serve as an absolute beacon in the skies with regard to the vexed question of authorship. It also enables us to get nearer to Shakespeare himself, to his mind, his tastes, his experiences, and his deeper thought than does any other single way I know of studying him.

I believe that a poet, and more especially a dramatic poet, to some extent unconsciously 'gives himself away' in his images. He may be, and in Shakespeare's case is, almost entirely objective in his dramatic characters and their views and opinions, yet, like the man who under stress of emotion will show no sign of it in eye or face, but will reveal it in some muscular tension, the poet unwittingly reveals his own innermost likes and dislikes, observations and interests, associations of thought, attitudes of mind and beliefs, in and through the images, the verbal pictures he draws to illuminate something quite different in the speech and thought of his characters.

Shakespeare's images have, of course, constantly been picked out and drawn upon, to illustrate one aspect or another of the poet's thought or mind, but the novelty of the procedure I am describing is that *all* his images are

assembled, sorted, and examined on a systematic basis, the good with the bad, the disagreeable with the pleasant, the coarse with the refined, the attractive with the unattractive, and the poetical with the unpoetical.

They are not selected to point or to illustrate any preconceived idea or thesis, but they are studied, either as a whole, or in groups, with a perfectly open mind, to see what information they yield, and the result comes often as a complete surprise to the investigator.

In addition, it has been necessary, for purposes of comparison, to assemble and examine, on the same system, the images from a large number of plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries.

It takes a long time to assemble and classify the images. I do not believe any one could do it satisfactorily in less than several years' work; in the case of Shakespeare, it is essential gradually to grow familiar with his pictorial habit of thought, for, until one is fairly well saturated with this, it is very easy to overlook an image, often conveyed in a single word, which on a second, third, or fourth reading becomes quite clear. I have been at work on it now—intermittently—for over six years, and I am naturally far from satisfied yet. But when I have finished some of the deductions I am drawing from this material, I hope eventually to publish the material itself, so that other students can check and perhaps extend it, in order that it may serve as data and starting-point for other research of various kinds.

The undertone of running symbolic imagery, which I have described in the tragedies, I find to some extent in almost every play, contributing in various ways to the richness and meaning of the play, and profoundly influencing its effect upon us. In the tragedies it is closely connected with the central theme, and adds to and illuminates that theme; in the comedies as a whole, it contributes chiefly atmosphere and background; about its function in the histories it is less easy to generalize.

There is a simple but persistent running image through all the early histories from the first part of *Henry VI* (where there are only touches of it) culminating in *Richard II*. The two parts of *Henry IV* are curiously free from any continuous imagery of this kind, while *King John* is a very interesting example of a most strong symbolism which powerfully affects us pictorially and emotionally. In the later plays, the romances, this symbolism becomes more subtle, and Shakespeare's tendency is to have an underlying idea rather than a concrete picture in the mind, an idea which he clothes in various kinds of imagery.

I will first give examples of what I call the 'undersong' of imagery within the limits of a single play, then as found recurring in many plays, and I will follow this by some illustrations of the way it seems to me this iterative imagery may serve as 'touchstone' of personality, and may help to reveal to us not only individual characteristics which mark the writer, but may even at times enable us to catch a glimpse of that fleeting and elusive entity, the man himself.

As simple examples of the way the imagery in the comedies supplies atmosphere and background, as well as emphasizes or re-echoes certain qualities in the play, let us look at *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado*.

✓ In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we know that what we feel overpoweringly is the woodland beauty of the dreaming summer night, and it is only when we look closer that we realize in some measure how this sensation is brought about.
 ✓ The influence and presence of the moon is felt throughout, largely through the imagery, from the opening lines when the noble lovers impatiently measure the days to their
 ✓ wedding by the waning of the old moon and the coming of the new,

like to a silver bow

New-bent in heaven,

to the end, when Puck tells us the 'wolf behowls the moon', and that it is, therefore, the time of the night for the fairies' frolic.

Time and movement are both measured by her, for

mortals as well as for Puck and the fairies: the lovers make their tryst for the moment on the morrow

when Phoebe doth behold

Her silver visage in the watery glass,

the fairies compass the globe 'swifter than the wandering moon'. She is the 'governess of floods', and controls not only the weather, but also the fiery shafts of love which at will she quenches in her 'chaste beams'; she symbolizes the barren air of the cloister, where the sisters live

Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon;

she serves, as does the sun, for an emblem of steadfast constancy; and Hermia cries she would as soon believe a hole might be bored in the centre of the earth and the moon creep through it, as that Lysander should willingly have left her.

The word 'moon' occurs twenty-eight times, three and a half times more often than in any other play, partly, of course, owing to the prominence of Moonshine, often addressed as 'Moon', as a character in the comedy of the 'homespuns'. 'Moonlight', naturally, also occurs unusually often; indeed, Shakespeare only mentions moonlight in his plays eight times altogether, and six of these are in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as is also his only reference to moonbeams. His single use of 'starry' is also here, when Oberon tells Puck to cover the 'starry welkin', and the sensation of starlight, which is constant (the fairies dance by 'spangled starlight sheen'; Puck accuses Demetrius of 'bragging to the stars'; if moonshine be gone Thisbe will find her lover by starlight, and so on), is largely owing to the many comparisons to the stars which come naturally to those who are looking at them, as when Demetrius assures Hermia that though she has pierced his heart, and is a murderer, she looks

as bright, as clear,

As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere,

and Lysander declares that Helena

more engilds the night

Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.

This moonlit background then partly supplies the dreaming and enchanted quality in the play, which is reinforced by woodland beauty. This is drawn largely from two sources, closely allied and sometimes melting into one; the high proportion of poetical images—95 out of a total of 114—considerably higher than in any other comedy, and the very large number of nature-images, including animals and birds. These Shakespeare always has, but their number here is unusual, for in addition to those listed under 'nature', there are many which have to be classified under other headings, which really, all the time, are calling up country pictures before us. Thus the 'green corn' which

Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard,

which is really a personification, brings to the mind above all else the sight of the fields at the end of many a wet English summer, just as the description of the way

the spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries,

which comes under 'clothes', really presents us with a pageant of the swift succession of the seasons in their many-coloured garb.

Even the measurement of Time is made, not only by the moon, but also by the cock-crow, the 'middle summer's spring', and the 'lightning in the collied night', by the greening of the wheat and the coming of the hawthorn buds, by the mating of the birds and the swimming powers of the leviathan, by dawn and sunrise, by a shadow and a sound.

And the birds too, whose song and sound is heard throughout, as it should be in an English woodland play, the dove, the nightingale, the rook, and the lark,—these are, as with Shakespeare always, used as a measure of all kinds of activities and sense-values: of light movement, 'hop as light as bird from brier', of sweet sound,

'more tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear', of colour-sense,

high Taurus' snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand,

or of headlong scattered flight, as when the wild geese or russet-pated choughs

Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky.

Even in the farce of the rustics we get—as it were by chance—a splash of nature-beauty flung by the way such as:

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,

and in the play as a whole the succession of imaginative pictures crystallizing experiences, emotions, and sensations familiar to all English nature lovers has never been surpassed by Shakespeare himself. These are all well known, for they are among our greatest poetry, and a score of them could be named in this play alone, but two must suffice here.

We all know that delightful mid-season of early autumn when the night frosts nip the late summer flowers, and through which the hardy monthly roses persist in gaily blooming, but it is Shakespeare who has painted the poet's picture of it for ever with its exquisite mingling of sharp air and sweet scents, in the Fairy Queen's description of what was probably the experience of many a gardener at the end of the cold wet summer of 1594:

we see

The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set.

We have most of us seen a summer's sunrise over the sea, but Shakespeare has immortalized the pageant for us in a riot of colour and beauty when we watch with Oberon,

Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.

No wonder Keats underscored this play in parts almost continuously, for sheer poetry, nature and moonlight were his loves, and he found them all here together to his hand, as nowhere else in literature, in rich and joyous abundance. And these, largely through the imagery we have been analysing, have stamped their special impress on the play, which leaves us, as it has left myriads, over nearly three and a half centuries, amazed and bewitched by beauty and the strange power of the poet's pen.

In *Much Ado* we find ourselves in an entirely different atmosphere, gay, sparkling, unsentimental, witty, and we notice at once what a number of lively images there are in this play, of light sound and swift movement, which sustain this atmosphere, dancing (a Scotch jig, a measure, a cinque pace), music (the jesting spirit crept into a lute string, the clapper of a bell), song (in what key shall a man take you, to go in the song?), riding, galloping, ambling, shy swift birds (spirits 'coy and wild as haggerds of the rock'), the lightning-quick action of the hunting dog (wit as quick as the greyhound's mouth): these and others form a fitting accompaniment and setting for the gay and high-spirited girl born under a dancing star, in whose eyes 'disdain and scorn ride sparkling'.

Besides this note of gaiety, the dominant motive is English country life, but of a sort entirely different from the languorous moonlit atmosphere of the enchanted wood. It is a setting of active outdoor work and sport, at times contending against cold and storm, largely created indirectly through the imagery, in which the most noticeable and continuous idea is that of the country sports of bird-snaring and angling; both lovers being thought of as birds limed and caught in a net, or fish hooked by the 'treacherous bait'.

As compared with some plays, there are not a great many nature similes, but at times they run almost continuously. Thus, in the charming little scene of only slightly over a hundred lines, in the orchard (iii. i), when Hero and Ursula bait their trap for Beatrice, we notice a succession

of rural pictures—the pleached honeysuckle-bower, which, ripened by the sun, yet keeps it out; the lapwing running close to the ground couched in the woodbine; the pleasant angling

to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream;

the young wild hawks, the vane ‘blown with all winds’, the ‘covered fire’ of weeds, the smoke of which so deliciously scents English gardens, the ‘limed’ trap, and the wild bird being tamed—all of which stimulate and sustain in us the consciousness of the background of active outdoor country life.

This is augmented by the repeated use of weather and seasons for purposes of comparison, as when Beatrice so wounds Benedick’s pride by telling him he was ‘duller than a great thaw’, or Don Pedro exclaims at his ‘February face’,

So full of frost, of storm, of cloudiness,

as well as by touches like Dogberry’s ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baas, the sound of Beatrice’s dog barking at a crow, Don John’s ‘forward March-chick’, or the secret of the rooting of crops, expounded by Conrade. To these may be added the many vivid country pictures drawn so easily and lightly by Benedick, such as the poor hurt fowl that creeps into the sedges, the melancholy lodge in a warren, the schoolboy who, overjoyed at finding a bird’s nest, unwarily shows it to his companion, who steals it, the howling dog, or the honest drover who sells bullocks. All through, whatever the scene, the country outdoor atmosphere is kept before us, as when Don Pedro rounds off the rite of hanging Hero’s epitaph on her tomb in church, by his picture, in delicate classical vein, of the coming of an English dawn:

look, the gentle day,
Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about
Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.

In addition to this running imagery within a single play, there is also much repetitive imagery throughout the whole of Shakespeare's work, which supplies us with all kinds of information.

Thus, the repeated evidence of clusters of certain associated ideas in the poet's mind is one of the most interesting of studies, and throws a curious light on what I suppose the psycho-analyst would call 'complexes'; that is, certain groups of things and ideas—apparently entirely unrelated—which are linked together in Shakespeare's subconscious mind, and some of which are undoubtedly the outcome of an experience, a sight or emotion which has profoundly affected him.

I can best make this clear by giving an example, and I will choose a very simple and straightforward one. These groups are not all so easily interpreted as this is.

It is quite certain that one of the things which rouse Shakespeare's bitterest and deepest indignation is feigned love and affection assumed for a selfish end. He, who values so intensely—above all else in human life—devoted and disinterested love, turns almost sick when he watches flatterers and sycophants bowing and cringing to the rich and powerful *purely in order to get something out of them for themselves*. It is as certain as anything can be, short of direct proof, that he had been hurt, directly or indirectly, in this particular way. No one who reads his words carefully can doubt that he had either watched some one, whose friendship he prized, being deceived by fawning flatterers, or that he himself had suffered from a false friend or friends, who, for their own ends, had drawn out his love while remaining 'themselves as stone'.

Now whenever the idea of false friends or flatterers occurs we find a rather curious set of images which play round it. These are, a dog or spaniel, fawning and licking, candy, sugar or sweets, thawing or melting. So strong is the association of these ideas in Shakespeare's mind, that it does not matter which of these items he starts with—dog

or sugar or melting—it almost invariably, when used in this particular application, gives rise to the whole series.

The simplest example is that in *Julius Caesar*, which starts with *thawing*. When Metellus Cimber prostrates himself before him, Caesar checks him, saying:

Be not fond,
To think that Caesar bears such rebel blood
That will be *thaw'd* from the true quality
With that which *meliteth* fools, I mean, *sweet* words,
Low-crook'd court'sies and *base spaniel-fawning*,
Thy brother by decree is banished:
If thou dost bend and pray and *fawn* for him,
I spurn thee like a *cur* out of my way.

In *Hamlet* the image starts with *candy*. Hamlet tells Horatio he is the most just man he has ever known, and checks his friend's natural impulse to demur at this sudden and unlooked-for praise by saying 'Nay, do not think I flatter', for what have I to gain from you?

Why should the poor be flatter'd?
No, let the *candied tongue* lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow *fawning*.

A touch of the idea recurs when Hotspur, speaking of Bolingbroke's attitude before he was king, cries:

Why, what a *candy* deal of courtesy
This *fawning greyhound* then did proffer me!

In *Antony* the first item of the image is *dog*, and the underlying idea is again false flattery, when Antony, thinking himself betrayed and deserted by Cleopatra and her followers, cries:

The hearts
That *spaniel'd* me at *heels*, to whom I gave
Their wishes, do *discandy*, melt their *sweets*
On blossoming Caesar.

Fragments of the same image recur when the original chord of 'flatterers' is touched, as when Cassius tells Antony that his words

rob the Hybla bees,
And leave them honeyless,

and Antony then rounds on both Brutus and Cassius, crying

Villains, . . .

You . . . *fawn'd like hounds*,
And bow'd like bondmen, kissing Caesar's feet;
Whilst damned Casca, *like a cur*, behind
Struck Caesar on the neck. O, you flatterers!

Here we begin with 'sweets', and, with the exception of 'melting', the rest of the series follows.

The explanation of this curious and repeated sequence of ideas is, I think, very simple. It was the habit in Elizabethan times to have dogs, which were chiefly of the spaniel and greyhound type, at table, licking the hands of the guests, fawning and begging for sweetmeats with which they were fed, and of which, if they were like dogs to-day, they ate too many, and dropped in a semi-melting condition all over the place. Shakespeare, who was unusually fastidious, hated the habit, as he hated all dirt and messiness, especially connected with food.

So there come to be linked in his mind two things he intensely dislikes, one in the physical everyday world, the other in the world of mind and emotions: the fawning cupboard love of dogs, their greed and gluttony, with its sticky and disagreeable consequences, and the other fawning of insincere friends, bowing and flattering for what they hope to get, and turning their backs when they think no more is coming to them.

In one play, *Timon of Athens*, in which Shakespeare expressed some of his profoundest as well as his most bitter thoughts, we find that the whole subject is just this particular one about which he felt so acutely—a man betrayed by false friends and flatterers.

What do we find is the central image, the picture constantly before Shakespeare's eyes in this play? Dogs: dogs fawning and eating and lapping and licking, with 'gluttonous maws' devouring their lord's meat; hounds feasting on the blood of the animal they have killed; dogs being

given food denied to men; dogs licking up remnants; dogs being stoned and spurned and kicked; a mangy dog, a sleeping dog, an unpeaceable dog, a beggar's dog.

Even Timon's imprecations are coloured by this picture, which is ever with him, 'Destruction *fang* mankind' he cries:

And may diseases *lick up* their false bloods!

and the thought of Flavius is likewise tinged with it; why, he asks the servants of his ruined lord's creditors, did you not submit your bills,

When your false masters eat of my lord's meat?

Then they could smile and fawn upon his debts,

And take down the interest into their gluttonous maws.

This constant preoccupation with dog-nature can be seen by any one on turning over the pages of the play; I will only remind you of the great central scene, practically every word of which I believe to be Shakespeare's, when Timon, found by Apemantus in the woods, rounds on the cynic and tells him he is but a rogue and a beggar who really scorns and envies those who are better off than he is, had he ever had a chance he would have rioted with the best; and he proceeds to expound his own position in a passionate speech.

It opens with 'dog' and ends with 'flatterer', but had we not the key of the earlier group of images, we should scarcely realize that it also is shot through with the picture of dogs licking sweets, and with their mouths and tongues melting the iced sugar on cake or sweetmeats.

'Thou', says Timon, 'art a slave,'

whom Fortune's tender arm

With favour never clasp'd, but bred a *dog*,

and the associative picture starts again:

Hadst thou, like us from our first swath, proceeded

The *sweet* degrees that this brief world affords

To such as may the passive drugs of it

Freely command, thou wouldst have plunged thyself

In general riot, *melting* down thy youth

In different beds of lust, and never learn'd
The *icy* precepts of respect, but follow'd
The *sugar'd* game before thee. But myself,
Who had the world as my *confectionary*,
The *mouths*, the *tongues*, the eyes and hearts of men
At duty, . . . I, to bear this,
That never knew but better, is some burden:
. . . Why shouldst thou hate men?
They never flatter'd thee: . . . Hence, be gone!

This curious group of images is but one example of many such associated groups, which, when studied together, throw a distinct light on Shakespeare's likes and dislikes, physical sensations, experiences, and emotions, and sometimes on his deepest thought and feelings.

This habit of returning under similar emotional stimulus to a similar picture or group of associated ideas is clearly one of Shakespeare's characteristics which serves as a 'touchstone' of his authorship. Indeed, through his images, Shakespeare seems to me often to have set his hall-mark on a play or scene, as distinctly as ever goldsmith stamped true metal.

Here, for example, are two pictures:

A thousand knees
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
To look that way thou wert.

Well could I curse away a winter's night,
Though standing naked on a mountain top,
Where biting cold would never let grass grow,
And think it but a minute spent in sport.

It is an unusual scene; the one of a vast company, the other of a single figure, naked, in biting winter cold on the summit of a barren mountain, and nothing remotely resembling it is to be found in a search of the work of twelve contemporary dramatists, although we find an echo of the same idea in Henry IV's indignant refusal to ransom Mortimer, 'No, on the barren mountains let him starve'.

The first picture comes from *The Winter's Tale*, a play which most people, except perhaps Pope and Mr. J. M. Robertson, believe to be wholly Shakespeare's, the second is from *Henry VI*, part ii, a play continuously doubted by critics of every kind, and of which Fleay said that Shakespeare probably never wrote a line.

Personally, I believe that if Fleay had looked a little closer, he would have allowed that Shakespeare wrote at least these four lines just quoted.

We may note that both pictures are used as a measure of time, both come with a hot gush of anger, and both are connected in the writer's mind with torment; in the one Paulina has just been asking Leontes

What wheels? racks? fires? what flaying? boiling?
In leads or oils?

he has in store for her, while, in the other, Suffolk is in the midst of wishing for his enemies poison and 'all the foul terrors in dark-seated hell'.

When it is found possible to multiply five, ten, twenty, or even thirtyfold such proof of likeness of idea and often of emotional stimulus or setting in images, between scenes or plays of disputed and of undoubted authenticity, the probability of the presence of Shakespeare's hand becomes very strong.

Another way in which the imagery test works I may illustrate from *Henry VIII*. Here we have a play which most critics agree was not all written by Shakespeare. They agree also that his collaborator was almost certainly Fletcher, but, of late, critical opinion has gone even farther, and the play has by some been reft from Shakespeare altogether, and handed over bodily to Fletcher and Massinger. There are in it undoubted likenesses to Massinger and he probably had some hand in it (though many parallels quoted in proof of his authorship apply with equal, if not greater force to Shakespeare). In spite of these likenesses, however, I am one of those who still believe that Shakespeare wrote the

greater part of the play, though I cannot now go into all my reasons.

I would just point out here that it has a very marked running symbol in the imagery, a continuous picture in the poet's mind of the human body seen in endlessly varied action, which seems partly summed up in Norfolk's description near the middle of the play of Wolsey's 'strange postures' (III. ii. 111-19).

Now this habit of seeing emotional or mental situations throughout a play in a repeatedly recurring physical picture seems to me to be peculiar to Shakespeare. I have up to now found it in no other writer, but this examination is not yet quite complete. I find in others an image *repeated*: thus in *The Faithful Shepherdess* Fletcher thinks of desire and love as *fire*, and repeats this again and again, 'consuming fires', 'wanton flames', 'hot flashes', and so on, but that is all there is to it; the image, which is a verbal commonplace, is entirely static, and you cannot feel there is any *picture* in the writer's mind. I find Chapman using a number of images of the body, as in *Byron's Conspiracy*, but there is no unity in them, no life, whereas Shakespeare's way is to conjure up a kind of 'moving picture', which is continually reappearing in different forms and from different aspects in the images.

He is particularly fond of the body as a running symbol, but it is always the body from some special aspect or angle, which is continuous throughout the play; thus in *Lear* it is a *tortured* body, in *Hamlet* a *diseased* one, in *Coriolanus* the different members and functions of the body, and so on.

There are three aspects of the picture of a body in the mind of the writer of *Henry VIII*: the whole body and its limbs, the various parts, such as tongue, mouth, eyes, and—much the most constant—bodily action of almost every kind; walking, stepping, marching, running, and leaping; crawling, hobbling, falling, carrying, climbing, and perspiring; swimming, diving, flinging, and

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ing; crushing, strangling, shaking, trembling, sleeping, g, and, especially and repeatedly, the picture of body or back bent and weighed down under a heavy n.¹

— may just slightly indicate how this symbol works. Buckingham thinks of the tourney on the Field of the Cloth of Gold as a body, and asks:

Who did guide,
I mean, who set the body and the limbs
Of this great sport together?

He similarly pictures the plot against the King, so that when the nobles are arrested he exclaims:

These are the limbs o' the plot: no more, I hope.

Norfolk, trying to restrain Buckingham's anger with the Cardinal, says:

Stay, my lord,
 . . . to climb steep hills
Requires slow pace at first . . .
 Be advised;
 . . . we may outrun,
By violent swiftmess, that which we run at,
And lose by over-running.

We note as we read that many of the most vivid images in the play are of movements of the body, such as Norfolk's description of Wolsey diving into the king's soul, Cranmer crawling into the king's favour and strangling his language in tears, Katharine's

 sufferance panging
As soul and body's severing,

or her picture of the great cardinal, with the king's aid, going swiftly and easily over the shallow steps, until mounted at the top of the staircase of fame.

¹ I know that this image is a very favourite one of Massinger's, but it is also often used by Shakespeare, and, so far as I have yet examined, it is never used by Massinger as part of a continuous picture, as here. At the same time, I believe that almost certainly Massinger had a hand in the play, and some of these 'body' images may be due to him.

Wolsey thinks constantly in terms of body movement; and among his images are those of a soldier marching in step with a squadron, a man scratched and torn by pressing through a thorny wood, or set on by thieves, bound, robbed, and unloosed; and in his last great speeches, which, in spite of rhythm, I incline to believe are Shakespeare's, he speaks of having '*trod the ways of glory*', sees Cromwell *carrying* peace in his right hand, urges him to *fling away* ambition, and pictures himself successively as a rash *swimmer* venturing far beyond his depth with the meretricious aid of a bladder, a man *falling headlong* from a great height like a meteor or like Lucifer, and finally, *standing bare and naked* at the mercy of his enemies.

The image of the back bent under the load recurs five times, and is obviously and suitably symbolic of Wolsey's state, as well as of the heavy taxation. Wolsey complains that the question of the divorce was 'the weight that pulled him down', and, after his dismissal, sees himself as a man with an unbearable burden suddenly lifted off him, assuring Cromwell that he thanks the king, who has cured him, 'and from these shoulders' taken 'a load would sink a navy';

a burden

Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven.

So also the king pictures himself as a man cruelly burdened, sweating under his load, when he turns to the Bishop with his query:

my Lord of Lincoln; you remember
How under my oppression I did reek,
When I first moved you.

The idea of a man falling from a great height is constant in the case of both Wolsey and Cranmer; and the remonstrances made with their accusers are in each case exactly alike,

Press not a falling man too far,

'tis a cruelty

To load a falling man.

This 'undersong' of imagery, peculiarly Shakespearian, of a human body seen in every form of physical activity, seems to me to throw some fresh light on the problem of authorship, and the first question one asks is, 'Does this symbol run right through all the scenes, Shakespearian and those generally considered non-Shakespearian alike?' The answer is that it does not.

The generally accepted Shakespearian scenes, it will be remembered, are i. i and ii, ii. iii and iv, the early part of iii. ii, and v. i. I find that the greatest number of these images occurs in Act i, scenes i and ii, Act ii, scene iv, and Act v, scene i, that there are several in ii. iii, and the early part of iii. ii. Outside these, there are nine in the latter part of iii. ii, two in v. iii, and two in ii. ii. Now, curiously enough, quite apart from this fact, I already had found good reason to believe, from the point of view of images, as I shall show in a separate study, that Shakespeare had written more of Act iii, scene ii than is generally allotted to him, and that he had, at least, given some touches to v. iii and ii. ii.

With these three exceptions, not one of these active 'body' images is to be found in any of the other scenes,¹ usually judged not to be Shakespeare's; that is i. iii and iv, ii. i, iii. i, iv. i and ii, and v. ii, iv, and v.

This is worth noting, for, in other cases, when an image is dominant—as, for instance, a tortured body is in *Lear*—it is to be found practically all through the play. Thus, in *Lear*, the only scene in which it is completely absent is the short business conversation of twenty-five lines between Cornwall and Edmund (v. iii). Everywhere else there are echoes and touches of the prevailing or 'floating' picture.

So that the entire breaking of the dominant thread of

¹ There is one 'burden' image in iii. i. 111, but there is a subtle difference in it. It may be pure chance, but it does not carry with it the picture of a body *in action*, as all the other images do. Cf. iii. ii. 407, v. iii. 76, ii. iv. 208, or even iii. ii. 380, where the word 'shoulders' vivifies the whole picture.

imagery in these particular scenes in *Henry VIII*, judged for quite other reasons not to be Shakespeare's, is, I think, significant, and points to another mind having been at work on them.¹

I have said that in this play the images give me reason to think that Shakespeare's hand is visible in parts at least of scenes hitherto denied to him. Here is one instance of the kind of thing I build on, and there are many such. Towards the end of scene iii in Act v, generally thought not to be Shakespeare's, when Henry snubs Gardiner, who has just addressed him in terms of fulsome hypocrisy, the king uses these words:

You were ever good at sudden commendations,
Bishop of Winchester. But know, I come not
To hear such flattery now, and in my presence
They are too thin and bare to hide offences.
To me you cannot reach, you play the spaniel,
And think with wagging of your tongue to win me.

Does not this association of hypocritical flattery with the spaniel nature strike a familiar note when we remember the constant association of these two things in Shakespeare's mind? And when we add that no single image of fawning dogs even without the association of flatterers is to be found in a search of nine of Fletcher's, and of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, and that, out of fifty-seven plays by a dozen contemporary dramatists, the only association I find of fawning dogs with flatterers is once in Marlowe:

We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please
(*Jew of Malta*, II. iii. 781.)

and once in Ben Jonson, who speaks of parasites,

With their court-dog-tricks, that can fawn and fleer,
(*Volpone*, III. i. 59.)

¹ I do not for a moment offer this as a solution of the very puzzling riddle of the authorship of *Henry VIII*. There is a great deal more to be said about the evidence of the images, which by no means all points one way, and I think there are at least two possible explanations of this broken thread of imagery. But I do suggest that it is a factor which should be taken into account in any investigation of the problem.

it would seem as if the odds were heavy in favour of this image being Shakespeare's.

And finally, to pass to my last point, I believe, as I said earlier, that we can detect, unerringly, many of Shakespeare's personal characteristics, experiences, and even points of view as it were obliquely in and through the verbal pictures he draws in such profusion to illustrate quite other emotions and thoughts in the hearts and minds of his characters. I believe that when these pictures are all assembled, and can be studied in proportion, it is possible to build up from them a fairly trustworthy picture, not only of the peculiarities of his bodily senses and organism, of his tastes and interests, of things seen and deeply felt, especially in youth, but also to some extent a picture of his attitude of mind, his opinions and beliefs such as you could never gain with any certainty from opinions or beliefs expressed directly as such by any one of his characters. I can, perhaps, illustrate by two or three examples how this seems to me to work.

When Othello brings out the horror of the contrast between the fair looks of Desdemona and what he believes her deeds entirely by means of *smell*, lamenting

O thou weed,
Who art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet
That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst
ne'er been born!

and answering her piteous query, 'Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?' with the agonized cry

What committed!
Heaven stops the nose at it;

we not only realize Othello's torture, racked between love and repulsion, but we also know incidentally that Shakespeare had a sensitive nose.

And when in addition we find that he repeatedly expresses disgust and loathing through the medium of revolting smells, chiefly of unwashed humanity and decaying

substances, and that to his imagination sin and evil deeds always *smell foully*, we are justified in assuming that he himself intensely disliked bad smells.

Further, if we are to judge by his images, it would seem that he is more sensitive to the horror of bad smells than to the allure of fragrant ones. It is not possible now to demonstrate this in detail, but it is significant that, in his most sustained and exquisite appreciation of the rose (sonnet 54), what chiefly appeals to him is the fact that, unlike other flowers, roses even when faded never smell badly, but that

Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made.

What he shrinks from above all is a fair flower with 'the rank smell of weeds' (sonnet 69), or a sweet-smelling flower which turns very much the reverse when dead, and we can sense the deep repulsion in the words,

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

In this kind of way we can glean much information indirectly about his senses. His colour-sense as seen through his images is so interesting and so individual that it deserves far more time than we can give it to-day. The same is true of his marvellously acute touch-perception, his quick consciousness of the texture of the skin, Desdemona's 'smooth as monumental alabaster', Perdita's hands 'soft as dove's down', the hard horniness of the palm of a ploughman. We have constant evidence of his sensitiveness to the surface-quality of various substances, the smoothness of ice or of oil, the pleasant softness of rain, the cold hardness of stone, and the smooth imperviousness of marble, and it does not surprise us that some of the most vivid and haunting of his metaphors are drawn from this delicate sense of touch.

Can we not *feel* Falstaff manipulating the wax till he gets it to precisely the right degree of softness when he remarks complacently of Shallow, 'I have him already tempering between my finger and thumb, and shortly will I seal with him'? And is not Angus's satisfaction that Macbeth is reap-

ing the reward of his deeds expressed in what is surely one of the most terrible and haunting pictures in a play already replete with them, terrible, because of the substance *suggested by its texture*, but not named,

Now does he feel

His secret murders sticking on his hands?

Or again, as throwing light on his tastes and interests, look at Jaques's good-natured advice to Touchstone dissuading him from being married by Sir Oliver 'under a bush like a beggar', and telling him to get to church, 'and have a good priest that can tell you what marriage is: this fellow will but join you together as they join wainscot; then one of you will prove a shrunk panel, and like green timber warp, warp'. We see the force of Jaques's argument, so vividly illustrated, that the Puritan preacher cannot marry them legally, and that then being but loosely joined in a way which can only be successful if their own characters are perfectly straight and upright, one of them will probably bend and twist out of it, which was indeed precisely what Touchstone intended to do. But we also see that Shakespeare had closely observed carpenters joining oak panelling and dovetailing it together, and had experienced how important it was for the success of that particular job that the wood should be perfectly dry and well seasoned. And when in addition we find that of all the many trades and crafts and their processes upon which Shakespeare draws so constantly for his similes—the smith shaping the molten iron in his forge, the butcher in his slaughter-house, the potter tempering clay and whirling his wheel, the tailor cutting out by his pattern, the weaver at his loom, the glover, the printer, the soldierer, the dyer—that of all these and others, the craft he seems by far the most familiar with, and in the terms of which he thinks most often and most easily is that of a village carpenter and joiner; when we discover that the number of images from screwing, nailing, riveting, hoop-ing a barrel with ribs of metal, the action of wedges, the tendency of wood to shrink and warp, and general joinery

and carpentry is remarkable, as well as the number of those from specific tools—a hammer, a mallet, a handsaw, a file, an auger or a vice, and the sharpening of knives and implements on a whetstone—we may surmise that Shakespeare himself had some knowledge of this craft. When, moreover, we find that nearly all these carpentry images are peculiarly vivid or real, showing exact and precise knowledge, we are, I think, justified in going farther and assuming that Shakespeare had a personal taste for and pleasure in carpentry, and that, contrary to our idea of most poets, he was probably a practical, neat, and handy man about the house, as we know that he was a 'Johannes Factotum' about the stage.

So, by the same indirect means, we can follow his interest in and knowledge of other crafts, especially of needlework, for the small details of which he seems to have had a peculiarly observant eye.

Or, to take a question of individual temperament, Shakespeare's intense sympathy with the feelings of animals is illustrated again and again in his similes, and most especially his feeling for and love of birds, and his hatred of their sufferings when limed or snared. But let us choose something less obviously appealing than the snared or netted bird, and look at what he says about snails, and how much it reveals of the strange 'fluidity' of his own poet's character. He concentrates on their outstanding qualities and characteristics so unerringly that, as Keats says in commenting on it, 'he has left nothing to say about nothing or anything'.

Most people, asked suddenly to name the outstanding quality of the snail, would answer 'its slow pace'. Not so Shakespeare, who assigns that second place only. The snail seems to him an example of one of the most delicately sensitive organisms in nature; it is 'love's feeling' only that

is more soft and sensible

Than are the tender horns of cockled snails.

The marvellously sensitive simile in *Venus and Adonis*, de-

scribing this peculiarity, also incidentally reveals the poet's acute appreciation of the point of view of the other person, when he describes the feelings of the

snail, whose tender horns being hit,
Shrinks backward in his shelly cave with pain,
And there all smother'd up in shade doth sit,
Long after fearing to creep forth again.

Notice how he emphasizes the greater poignancy of mental than physical pain, even in a snail, and remember how appositely he applies the same sensation and action years afterwards when describing Aufidius,

Who, hearing of our Marcius' banishment,
Thrusts forth his horns again into the world;
Which were inshell'd when Marcius stood for Rome,
And durst not once peep out.

Had we nothing but these three similes to guide us, we should realize that the author of them had the most exquisitely sensitive apprehension of the feelings of others, not only of men but of animals. As we know, because he himself tells us so, that Keats took part in the existence of a sparrow when it came and picked in the gravel before his window, so surely do we know, because Shakespeare tells us so in another way, that he took part in the existence of the snail and its feelings when he inadvertently touched it on the garden path.

I claim, moreover, that we can go even farther than this, and that we can obtain quite clear glimpses into some of the deeper thoughts of Shakespeare's mind through this oblique study of his imagery. Take, for instance, the subject of Death, of which we have upwards of eighty images and personifications; it is impossible to study all these without gaining at least a glimmer of light on Shakespeare's own attitude towards it.

There is, of course, much well-known and intensely suggestive discussion and reflection on death in his work, especially in those three closely related plays *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Timon*, but it is all strictly the

outcome of the dramatic situation and the view of the character who speaks.

Hamlet's obsession with and revolt from the physical horror of death, his fears and doubts as to the death of the mind, and his final realization that death, not life, is 'felicity', the Duke's arguments to prove that the best of life is sleep, and death itself no more, Claudio's natural horror of the unknown, Timon's certainty that for him the 'nothingness' of death is liberation and fulfilment,—all this and much more Shakespeare himself may have felt and believed, but we do not know that he did.

What we do know is that when he thought of death certain sets of pictures flashed into his mind, and these we can look at with him, and, by virtue of his own genius, we can see them almost as vividly as he did.

These pictures reveal a highly sensitive imagination which realizes to the full that 'cowards die many times before their death', and that the sense of death 'is most in apprehension', yet which shrinks intensely from its physical side and the horrors of it, and in that mood sees Death as an 'ugly monster', a 'rotten carcase' in rags, an 'odoriferous stench'. This side of Shakespeare is very conscious of the greed and destructiveness of Death, especially in war or tragic accident, as in *King John* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and pictures him as a warrior with jaws of steel 'mousing the flesh of men', a skeleton feasting upon soldiers by the thousand, a 'carriage monster', a proud and mighty being, who to supply food for his feast strikes down kings, queens, and princes 'at a shot', and a mouth gorged with food.

Viewed thus, as the destroyer of youth untimely, by accident or battle, Death is frightful and repellent to look at, a

Hard-favour'd tyrant, ugly, meagre, lean,

Grim-grinning ghost.

It is sometimes suggested, however, that what we see is not Death as he really is, but a mummer or actor, 'thou antic

death, which laugh'st us here to scorn'; a boggy masked to frighten children, as when the messenger after the battle of Shrewsbury cries:

. . . hateful death put on his ugliest mask
To fright our party.

Yet we cannot feel that anything of Shakespeare's own hope or experience is expressed in the words of Northumberland in an earlier play,

even through the hollow eyes of death
I spy life peering.

When Death takes toll of youth and beauty he is thought of sometimes as a lover, especially in the case of Juliet and Cleopatra; Constance, in her grisly picture, greets him as husband and lover; while Claudio in despair, Lear in his frenzy, and Antony in set determination, each resolve to greet death bravely and with zest, as a bridegroom running to meet his bride.

The power of Death, and man's helplessness in his grip, is constantly kept before us, and Shakespeare shows us Death as a wrestler, a tilter, an antagonist against whom we fight a losing game, and whom we can at most hold 'awhile at the arm's end'; a hound dogging us at the heels, a hunter, a fowler, an archer with an ebon dart; a fell sergeant, 'strict in his arrest'; a soldier, laying siege to the mind, pricking and wounding it; a king boldly keeping his Court within the very confines of the crown of a mortal king; a jester scoffing and grinning at the pomp with which he humours a monarch's vanity, while, at his own time, with a little pin he bores his castle wall and claims him for his own; and life itself is seen but as Death's fool or dupe, ever vainly trying to escape him, while ever irresistibly drawn towards him.

These are, for the most part, aspects of Death seen under special circumstances, the terrible and hungry feeder in war, and the ravisher of youth, beauty, and strength, who mockingly plays with and dominates not only kings and princes but even life itself; and we realize that Shakespeare

is here merely presenting to his audience the figure of the grim yet semi-jocular skeleton with which he and they alike were familiar in medieval jest and picture.

May we dare to conjecture from his many other images something of Shakespeare's own view of death? I believe we may.

Even a glance at his pictures of life gives us some clue to its opposite. Thus, life is a voyage, uncertain and bound in shallows and miseries, a journey, a pilgrimage; death is a journey's end, sometimes a shipwreck, but never a haven or harbour. Life is a fever, a dream; death is the sure physician and a sleep; life is merely a breath and death the mirror which proves this to us; life is a light, a candle, a lamp, a fire, a spark; death the extinction of all these. Life is a spring flower, death a frost; life is a prison, death a release; life is a thread, a knot, death is the thread cut, decayed, or cracked, and the knot untied.

In general it would seem he does not rebel against death, but accepts it as a natural process, a debt we owe to God, the cancelling of the bond of life, and he thinks of it fairly constantly as the end of all we know, sometimes coming abruptly and harshly, as the untimely frost on a flower, a winter that kills, an axe set to a tree, or more gradually, as a canker or over-ripeness; but on the whole, most often, in spite of Hamlet's questionings and Claudio's ravings, an end wholly peaceful, merciful, and restful.

Most constantly of all he sees it as a sleep when 'the long day's task is done', or it is a window closing, shutting out the daylight, a black veil, very often a cloud over the sun, or, as I have said, the extinguishing of light, a burnt-out torch or candle, a spent lamp and the coming of night, when

the bright day is done,

And we are for the dark.

It is the key that unlocks the shackles of trouble and disease by which we are held fast in this world, that shuts up and makes an end of the day, but it is never the key that unlocks the door to a new life.

On the other hand, it is a way to freedom and liberty, a jailer releasing a prisoner to 'enlarge his confine', the kind umpire of men's miseries, who 'with sweet enlargement doth dismiss' them hence.

Only once does Shakespeare in his own person seem to tell us directly what he himself thinks about Death, and that is in the grave 146th Sonnet, addressed to the soul of man. Here we see the medieval picture reversed, and the greedy feaster on the flesh of men subdued and annihilated in his turn by the spirit of man grown strong, and here Shakespeare points out to us the way of life, and so of the defeat of death. This way is to concentrate on the nurture of the soul or spirit rather than the body, even at the expense of the body, which is but the 'fading mansion' of the soul, its servant and inferior, and here for the first and only time we find a note of hope and triumph, markedly absent from all his other pictures of man in his relation to 'that dark spirit':

Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

If we examine in this way Shakespeare's many pictures of other abstractions, of love and hate, of sin, evil and good, of time, of fear, and so on, we can, I submit, gradually assemble and create a fairly reliable picture of the general attitude of his mind, and in some cases of his very passionate feeling.

Thus, as we collect and examine our material, there seems gradually to emerge a very definite figure of an intensely alive, incredibly sensitive, and amazingly observant man. Probably a quiet one—he does not like noise—and not, it would seem, a dreamer, but practical and watchful, all the time absorbing impressions and knowledge like a sponge, registering them like a sensitive plate.

We see he is a country man through and through, that it is the sights and sounds of boyhood which chiefly remain with him, and that half a lifetime spent in a great city has never deflected by one iota his interest from the pageant of the English countryside to that of the streets, which latter, indeed, he seems hardly to notice. What he does notice are the sky and clouds, the seasons, the weather and its changes, rain, wind, sun, and shadow, and of all the outdoor occupations what he loves most is to work and saunter in his garden or orchard, and to note and study the flight and movements of the wild birds.

Next to this we find him most interested in the homely indoor occupations and routine, eating, drinking, sleeping, the body and its clothes, candles, fire and lamps, birth and death, sickness and medicine, parents and children, and especially he delights in watching the women's work continually going on in a cottage kitchen, preparing food, cooking, washing up, dusting, knitting, darning, and patching.

We see that in that kitchen, as well as enjoying much, he has also suffered from many things, from smoky chimneys, stopped-up ovens, guttering evil-smelling candles, and ill-trimmed lamps, as well as from greasy badly-cooked food and tainted or musty meat.

We can watch some of his tastes and opinions gradually developing; it is amusing, for instance, to see his interest in food and cooking and his fastidiousness beginning to grow in early middle age, whereas there is evidence even in his early work of his disgust at surfeit, as well as of his curiously modern belief that we bring upon ourselves a great deal of our own bad health by ill-regulated living, and especially by over-eating.

So the central figure gradually emerges, not an outline sketch merely, but full of detail, a living, breathing, and intensely human being, with marked individuality and tastes.

I believe that these pictures of Shakespeare's brain—I have some six thousand of them now collected—form an as yet almost unread and unstudied volume, packed with information as to the nature, experiences, and thoughts of the man about whom, I suppose, above all others, the world as a whole is most eager to learn. For generations we have striven pathetically and vainly to follow and study his mind and doings through the dry records of legal documents and law-suits, while all the time there has lain open before us a book full of facts, fragmentary perhaps, but sometimes dovetailing together in the most satisfactory way, a book ablaze with sidelights, not only on the man himself but also on his surroundings, and on the rich and many-coloured background of his thought and vision. I suggest that through these pierced lancet windows of the mind we can, if we will, listen to the sounds of the world he lived in, and learn which most affected and charmed him; we can catch vivid glimpses of the life he saw and the figures in it which specially enchanted him; we may even form some estimate as to how far he himself shared in or was affected by current beliefs and points of view; and all this information, and much more, we can gather direct from the person best qualified to give it us—Shakespeare himself.

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